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Missives and Other Un-Notes

Harry Gamboa Jr.

ABSTRACT Beginning his series of disorienting and theatrical vignettes with an extended introduction, Gamboa describes his childhood and young adulthood coming of age in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 70s. It is through these stories of prejudice in elementary school and of mass action against police brutality and the national government's neglect of communities of color, Gamboa implies, that readers should approach his text. Missives and other Un-notes skewers myths of US national identity, masculinity, and whiteness, placing readers in a dystopic world of violence, surveillance, and the constant threat of annihilation.

Introduction

"Spanish" was the initial English-language word that was introduced to me during my first day of kindergarten in Boyle Heights in 1955. The bold letters had been painted vertically in a thick blue tempera on the quickly fashioned dunce cap that was unceremoniously placed atop my head by the untethered teacher who believed that such a poorly announced entry into the mid-twentieth century would be an appropriate signifier befitting her interpretation of Mexican American youth. The steep learning curve turned out to be an excellent challenge to level the playing field as I quickly developed my vocabulary and sought out complex subjects that made the local public schools unsuitable for the pace of my development. By the final day of high school in 1969, I was well-versed in playing word games with the political establishment of that era and with the process of motivating my community to adopt the term "Chicano" as the self-defining word that would be expressed to assert a new starting point for enhanced national dialogue.

In 1971, I was marching with many young people in East Los Angeles during a peaceful protest against the politically motivated assassination of journalist Ruben Salazar (a prominent voice on behalf of the Chicano community) who had been shot to death by a police agent. The calm and silence of the protest demonstration was shattered when more than a dozen police officers opened fire with riot shotguns using live ammunition resulting in many fallen and dead. The subsequent reactionary mainstream news reports that fanned the false flames of negative stereotypes against Chicanos and mass arrests that followed along with Marshall Law-like tactics that were enacted created a toxic environment of oppression. The shock that such extreme measures of power would be utilized against American citizens of Mexican descent to counter the increasing social and political awareness of my peers caused me to reflect on my lack of documentary imagery to illustrate what I had witnessed to be an absolute atrocity against a nonviolent group of youth.

In 1972, I co-founded Asco, an art group that would employ various performance, photographic, and text-based projects, and mass media manipulation techniques, to create No Movies, fotonovelas, and to generate cultural myths that would be incorporated and eventually adopted by contemporary scholarship and the international art canon. In the 1980s, I was awarded fellowships by the National Endowment for the

Arts and the J. Paul Getty Trust Fund for the Visual Arts for my role in pursuing new genres involving the blending/bending of text/image/concept in works that either defied or extended established forms of expression.

I recently directed nearly a hundred performers from my Virtual Vérité (2005–2017) performance troupe to hopscotch their way across the various crevices and cracks of systemic breakdown to simulate the shattering effects of societal collapse while playing in the streets. Such performances involve counterintuitive posturing and non-sequential actions that serve as the premise for popup fotonovelas that occupy their rightful position in extending narratives that enter an alternate realm of consciousness. During the twenty-first century, my work has been exhibited in major museums alongside acclaimed artists and sometimes my slightest utterances are taken up as a befitting addition to the international lexicon whenever description, observation, or analysis requiring an unexpected mixture of concept and playfulness to upturn the most reluctant social conventions. It is with respect for tradition as well as anticipation of its demise that I submit “Missives and other Un-notes.”

Incoming, Imploding, and Insulting

The pounding on the door wasn’t unexpected but the flash grenade that landed in the baby’s crib enhanced the rude introduction to extreme ops tactics.

“Baby’s on fire. Taze the parent. Cuff the siblings. Shoot the dog.”

“ICE cold, blood hot.”

“Unit number seven is secure. Take down units nine and fourteen”.

The apartment complex is filling with black smoke and orange fumes. Several agents are beating three children with metal rods. A grandfather’s skull is being crushed under the lethal weight of a robotic apprehension boot.

“Mother is resisting. Stab.”

“Inject them all with opioids and charge them with felonies.”

“Targets vanquished. Zero survivors.”

“Deportations nullified. Thank you team.”

“Confiscate cash and family valuables then demolish the structure.”

“AI assessment declares victory.”

“Walking tall among the rubble means it is a glorious day.”

“We make shadows disappear.”

TV Isn’t Talking To Me

“Meet The Press, Face The Nation, This Week, generic obfuscation minus deep critical discourse. Mimicry and platforms for individuals and agencies that dance the minuet in subdued goose-step.”

“You’ll be better off watching cartoon reruns.”

“They explain the obvious without any authenticity. The criminals justify their crimes and the explainers wonder out loud how society has been poisoned without using any sweeteners.”

“I’ll change the channel for you.”

There are only three channels on this thing, I refurbished it to channel the 1950s limited experience. Watch and listen.”

MTP: The wall is a barrier that furthers soul-searching. Climb that.

FTN: Inhumanity is a word and money is action. Are you a verb or a noun?

TW: The two-party system is flawed but makes a beautiful mirror to reflect on our times.

“Next time, I’ll bring a bag of popcorn along.”

“The talking heads are ripe for decapitation.”

“It’ll never happen here. Everyone is on the same page. Talk is cheaper the more it is misinterpreted. Say it loud enough to be forgotten quickly.”

“They’re looking at me.”

“It is a silly illusion.”

“Could I be imagining it all?”

“Frame the virtual into total nonexistence.”

“But I would like to believe that it is important.”

“Close your eyes and count on no one.”

Arrogance Par Excellence

All of the uniformed young boys stood at attention. Their youthful enthusiasm was about to be bludgeoned by the bulldozing style of speech and manner of a frightful mouth that bared an endless row white sharp teeth.

“I love followers, especially the kind that can take it in the gut without whimpering to their mommies and daddies. I’ve come here to demand your respect but most importantly to get you to stop thinking of yourselves as being yourselves. You belong to me. When I was a young boy I knew that one day I’d be the grownup in charge and would lead all of you into a wonderful place that I call the homeland. You belong here but there are those who will never belong. I need you to grow up strong to make sure they never prosper.”

The campfire was burning white hot and threatened to surpass all containment efforts to prevent critical mass and meltdown.

“There has never been a time more important than today. You will sacrifice your will in exchange for safety, luxuries, and a world where no one looks any different than ourselves. You will be so happy that you were born to be who you are and not anyone else. Privilege is a right.”

Marshmallows placed on the sharpened tips of titanium skewers were handed out to each of the boys as they all sang in unison to a vintage drumbeat machine:

Decimate the invading hordes

*Dissolve whatever they might have thought
To be their birthright
Don't delegate the killing to your brothers and sisters
What might be liquidated today
By your own hand
By your own gun
Outrun the chaos to stop it in its tracks
Seize the tongue of the outspoken
Blind those who see falsely
An eye for an eye for an eye for an eye
I pledge to thee*

The tempo picks up autonomous speed as a thousand marshmallows are plunged into the brilliant flames:

*Eliminate the difference
By whatever force
The drug of choice is power
Don't hesitate the killing of your natural enemy
They would take from you what is not theirs to keep
Stab the hand that would steal
Your precious freedom
Storm their places of refuge
Set them alight with firebombs
They were not meant to be in our world
Sing so that they might hear and fear your voice
Let them tremble before your righteous sword.*

The many marshmallows are toasted and the aroma of sweetness with a hint of vanilla is in the air.

"That's some fine singing boys. I'm so proud of you. Now enjoy your camping experience and so happy to have stoked your interest in achieving purity of purpose."

The fire crackled with an ominous intensity as the arrogant figure disappeared behind a cadre of heavily armed security personnel that tossed fragrant flowers onto the ground as they retreated into a waiting helicopter. The rotor blades swept up massive volumes of air and quickly ascended into the night sky until it vanished without a trace among the stars and void of awareness.

Listless In The Waiting Room

The man had been instructed to surrender his identity documents along with whatever worldly possessions he had been carrying with him and to remove his clothing before being allowed to step into the waiting room. He complied meekly but was very ashamed of his own body as it was by far the most imperfect physical mass of human form as far as he could imagine, especially when compared to the beautifully alluring creatures that he had seen walking past him on the streets and along various misguided avenues that led him directly to the abject position of being a powerless subject for an experimental human trial involving volatile drugs and dangerous devices. He was quite certain that others would be absolutely disgusted to see him in such shape. He had already completely resigned himself to this lowest social role when he walked through the open door into vast empty waiting room. There were no chairs, stools, benches, sofas, or boxes that he could sit on so he stood silently and perfectly still in the middle of the room and waited for what could have been minutes or many hours.

An unfamiliar amplified voice spoke through several large speakers.

“Subject Number Six, please be so kind as to raise your arms and open your mouth wide while inhaling and exhaling. This shouldn’t cause you too much discomfort but we will need to arrive at a baseline before proceeding with the experiment.”

The man opened his mouth but found it difficult to breathe as though the air were being drawn out of him. It occurred to him that he might indeed suffocate before the experiment would begin in earnest. He had never noticed how heavy his arms were as it was a strain to lift them above his head. He wondered why the right arm seemed to be so elongated while the left arm had become a shriveled stump of an appendage. The shock of realizing that a few fingers were missing made the experience somewhat frightening and absurd.

“Try not to think about the present as you will be asked to perform several tasks that will require you to utilize learned behaviors from past events.”

Two assistants dressed in white jumpsuits with white rubber aprons approached the man from behind and caught him off guard, causing him to become startled for a moment.

“These anatomically enhanced robots will be touching your body in intimate ways. They are capable of interpreting your Alpha waves. They will do everything to initiate sexual arousal even though they are made of plastic, wires, glass, and a few odd trace metals. Their personality and intelligence is based on vaguely understood algorithms and their own self generating AI language.”

The two robots kiss the man while he attempts to fondle their nonexistent genitalia. He senses that they might be real humans but the hardness of their inhuman glare penetrates deep into his unconscious to strike fear and mental paralysis while causing him to become erect and reckless. They have been toying with him while introducing highly addictive psychotropic drugs into his body via ultra fine needles that penetrate his skin with each and every touch.

The ultra pretty robot is still in beta format and is subject to command reversal while the maximum sexy robot is fully functional and has the capacity to outlearn its creators.

“We, we, weeeee, like you. It is ultimate pleasure to die? What you say of revolutionary chemical compounds. Let’s get high.”

The man recognized the face and voice of the robot but found it to be nearly impossible to believe that his long-dead girlfriend would somehow be digitized to such perfection.

"I like like like to see inside your mind too. Music makes air hurt. I will put my hand here to cure the illness of the unexpected ego failure."

The man soon found himself in a strangely unfamiliar autoerotic relationship with two machines and an unseen voyeur. He could feel his consciousness expanding beyond all previous realms of his awareness. He was at once knowledgeable about all things while unable to articulate the simplest ideas. Time was dripping and tactile information became the primary source of knowing what would be unknowable under normal circumstances.

"Thank you for your participation. Surgical procedures were a huge success and have assisted in moving the study forward. Your participation in this trial has come to an end. You will receive payment via electronic deposit. Please see the pharmacist on the way out."

The man had lost all sense of time and wondered how he had become fully dressed. He found himself coming to full consciousness in an elevator that was heading down to the ground floor but was not sure what had just taken place. He was slightly dizzy and had a dull pain in the back of his head and his groin. He was covered in bandages. He could see his reflection in the polished mirrored interior of the elevator and realized that he was completely bruised with numerous stitches holding his flesh together where obvious acts of trauma had taken place. The elevator seemed to be going down many miles into the crust of the earth. Other people were crammed in tightly and he could smell their body odors. Even though his tongue was bleeding, he was tempted to lick them all but knew that his days of random experimentation were over. The elevator finally stopped and he exited at the ground floor to arrive at another waiting room where he was instructed to take a number and to sit down on a chair that was placed on one of the many hundred rows of chairs.

There were many warning signs posted on the walls and on the back of chairs:

REMAIN IN YOUR SEAT OR LOSE YOUR PLACE

ANY ACT OF HOSTILITY WILL BE MET WITH OVERWHELMING FORCE

DO NOT TOUCH ANYONE: SUPER-INFECTIONS ARE OMNIPRESENT

THE PHARMACIST IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

SECURITY HAS THE RIGHT TO SEARCH YOU

FOLLOW ALL VERBAL AND WRITTEN DIRECTIONS

Many people had already been called, served, and dismissed while the man sat listlessly in his chair for many hours past nightfall. The dull pain had become more defined as a sharply agonizing rupture causing him to moan uncontrollably.

"You will have to keep quiet or you will be thrown out. Others are in worse condition so you shouldn't be acting like you deserve more attention because the opposite will take place soon."

The security guard was armed with multiple lethal and non lethal weapons. The extendible metal baton was already in his black-gloved right hand.

"Don't make me shut you up."

The man silenced himself despite the intense pain and burning fever that was making him feel somewhat delirious and weak.

The guard walked away slowly as he eyed other potential rule breakers.

“Number one thousand four hundred and fifty-two is called. Please approach the window.”

The man got up with great difficulty and staggered to the window where a video screen was set up to engage him in the transaction. The man’s identity number and information pertaining to the prescription appeared on the screen.

“One moment. Lift your chin and look at the red dot on the screen.”

The man complied with the recorded voice command and a bright light burst was coupled with the taking of his photograph that instantly appeared on the screen.

“Your are to take one pill every three hours for the next ten days. Do not deviate from this regimen so that all will be fine by day eleven. If you suffer any excessive bleeding, stroke, or death, please discontinue use. The cost of this medication is being electronically deducted from your account. Your receipt has been emailed and texted to you. Thank you.”

The man walked out the door and onto the sidewalk where he then put the first pill into his mouth. He swallowed it quickly and within a few minutes he felt an incredible sensuous pleasure that went beyond any dream state he had ever known. His eyes became glazed and he was speechless. He wandered about the city throughout the night while the sky became darker as dawn was approaching. He lost all need for self reference and imagined that he was melting into the urbanscape. He was no longer alone. His footsteps retraced the flattening pathway of the many chemically induced zombie-like others who had joined in on the doomed parade while aimlessly traversing the city with an unfixed gaze and hopeless trajectory towards a sunless life of eternal addiction.

Official Reaction

“Please switch your devices to the off position, check in your weapons at the desk, place these personal radiation detectors to the lapels of your shirts and blouses, and stand in orderly file until we are given the go-ahead to enter the briefing room. You’ll notice that the green light will turn on when the decompression chamber has completed its task. If there are no questions then prepare to listen because no questions, statements, noises of any kind, no hand gestures, stomping of feet, or any motion that might be considered a threat will be allowed. You are fortunate to be given the opportunity to hear the official reaction to what has just taken place. The spokesperson should be here momentarily.”

Nearly fifty VIP journalists are at the front of the line followed by more than one hundred leading thinkers and doers. A hushed silence fills the space with dread as ten super intelligent chimera children walk through the door without first standing in line. It is the first experience for many of those present to see the living results of what many refer to as “designer kids.” Their mixture of human, animal, plant, and synthetic DNA structures is based on the engineering fetes of acclaimed geneticists and rogue scientists. One of the children was readily identifiable as being the most intelligent being on earth while the others were rumored to possess other capabilities not usually associated with the human species. Some of the children appeared to literally glow while others left nauseating scents in their wake. Many of those in line felt that their innermost thoughts had been breeched while others believed that they had been violated in some way simply by being in the presence of such impressive mutants.

“The green light is flashing; please enter the room in a calm fashion. Headphones are available for any of you who might not be fully conversant in the English language.”

The chimera children are standing on stage flanking the official spokesperson who has entered the room through a secret door. The guests move quickly to find their seats and remain standing until everyone is in place.

"Please sit down. This will only take a few minutes. We will be brief."

Two of the chimera children are holding a powdery yellow substance in their hands and start to consume the material in a way that any child would eat a scoop of ice cream.

"Welcome, everyone. As you know, catastrophes have their good and bad features. The recent limited nuclear exchange cost their side more than thirty million lives while our side suffered only ten million lives. With the current global birthrates that total should be recaptured within a short time. The primary concern involves nuclear fallout and the clustering of plutonium. We are all cognizant of the fact that it is generally referred to as nuclear waste but we are a nation that abhors waste. Why not put the stuff to good use? It is also referred to as yellow cake. I like chocolate cake and many of you must like birthday cake and so and so forth. You will notice that your radiation monitors are registering dangerous levels of gamma rays but soon you will see that the lethal threat will dissipate until we are back to normal ambient radiation readings."

One chimera child has already consumed the handful of yellow cake while the other is savoring the moment and eating more slowly.

We have instituted a new national program to reconstruct the DNA structure of every newborn and school-aged child so that they can successfully compete in a post-nuclear conflict world. It is sort of a free lunch program where each child will be expected to consume plutonium according to a certain percentage of their body weight. Some schools will offer grades while others will participate in other rewards programs to encourage the transformed youngsters to eat like their lives depended on it. Parents will be given some online instruction on how to cope with physical transformations such as the growing of horns, gills, hooves, scales, tentacles, tree bark, calcium-based shells, and other obvious signs of chimera activity. The national effort will eventually be expanded to include all teens and adults. Several States have opted for species purity laws and they will be severely sanctioned by the withholding of federal funds and quite possibly mass deaths due to radiation poisoning. Our scientific team has inserted radiation-adaptive happiness genes into these chimera children so that they might never know sadness, rejection, boredom, and most importantly, rebellion will be an unknown foreign behavior that will be linked only to the distant past. We will eventually do away with all agricultural and ranching subsidies as plutonium will become the primary food source for our country. Starvation will finally be eliminated. We have enough plutonium to feed millions for many thousands of years to come. I am so happy to bring this positive news to you all so that you can share with your readers, viewers, and listeners. Peace be with you."

The plutonium has been completely consumed and some of the other chimera children are showing signs that they are getting hungry. Some of the chimera children reveal their wings and fly around the room like canaries.

"We want more cake."

"Dessert is my favorite."

The spokesperson exits through another door and everyone else is excited by the prospect of eliminating the threat of nuclear fallout. Some of the individuals who were standing near the stage are exhibiting symptoms of severe radiation exposure and are led out behind a black lead curtain.

"I can hardly wait to eat some. It must taste like the ultimate angel food cake."

The VIP's and others left the briefing room in an optimistic mood and most had already forgotten about the mass fatalities that took place only a few days earlier.

"Chocolate cake with red wine. A wonderful diet.

"From now on it's yellow cake."

Bloody Eyes

"My father and grandfather went blind around the same age as I am know. I've seen so much in my life. Wonderfully beautiful moments like when my son was born and then later the birth of my daughter. I once saw a lizard's tail wiggling on the floor while I thought of a miraculous painting. I've seen things fall and break into a billion pieces. I was always trapped inside of my own visual world. I've also seen a thousand police bullets fly past me. I could see the hot projectiles moving in slow motion so I was able to avoid being hit while others were being massacred on the streets. I witnessed great tragedies involving violence, injustice, death, poor fashion combinations, architectural eyesores, phony interactions, and the visible emotional injuries of others. I've read several million words printed on many thousands of pages. I grew up watching TV but never realized that the physics of the medium never actually produces an image on the screen. It only etches a pathway in my brain to trick me into thinking that I've actually seen something. It is a very effective technique because everyone else believes that we are seeing the same thing. It is nothing but a way to ruin our use of limited time. My eyes are bleeding and my tears flow red."

"Please, stop talking. Reserve your strength. You've just been attacked by a mob of fascists. Pretend to be dead."

"I used to look in the mirror when I was a young boy. I was so pretty and happy but couldn't make up my mind what I was going to do about it for a long time. I wore fake eyelashes during my teens. I wore the coolest dark glasses in my thirties. I studied everyone and realized what it would take to survive under such harsh circumstances. I grew up laughing because I noticed the minute physical and social details that seemed to be the connecting points to how things were made or how systems functioned. I've always known how to pull a single brick from a building to make it collapse. One look and I would always comprehend how to break in or break out of any structure. I've talked my way out of handcuffs on several occasions because I saw the combination of the mental keys that it would take to set me free. But now, everything is blurring."

"You have several lacerations and other wounds. I've stuffed my shirt into the area where you are bleeding most profusely in hope of saving your life. I'd like to stay but I'm afraid that the thugs will return to kill the rest of us."

"You are so kind. I'm having trouble seeing you clearly. So strange, I don't feel any pain.

"There is nothing wrong with your eyes."

"I once saw a man drown another man using a neighbor's water hose that he jammed down his throat. The assailant's wife and children were cheering him on. Some of the other neighbors were drinking beer and having a fabulous time. It was a disgusting display of pure brutality. The man drowned on the lawn. Everyone pitched in to push the dead man off the property and onto the asphalt covered street. His body remained there until it was completely decomposed at which point the dogs and coyotes snatched his bones until nothing was left to mark his murder. Many years later when I was a young man I found myself dancing closely with a fabulous girl. It was his daughter, and she was bent on

revenge. I gave her my tactical knife and she ran out of the dancehall to extract justice on her own terms. She had a soft voice that continues to echo in my dreams.”

“They’re coming!”

“I looked into the mirror this morning and my eyes were filled with blood. I blame it on excessive alcohol consumption or other imagined illnesses. My eyes are tired. I’ve stared into the eyes of the most beautiful people. I’ve transfixed death. I can see that the approaching rioters are filled with hate. I can see that they want to take my eyes out. Let them make me blind and I will lead them into the shadows from where they will never return.”

Follow The Moneyed

Towards the end of the previous century, a well known multinational bank developed a plan to hire the most talented and gifted strategists for a particular project that would strengthen their corporate power and global influence. It began more than fifty years ago when the federal government contracted the bank to oversee all funds involved in operating a guest worker program to harvest crops and other seasonal manual labor duties. The bank’s immediate misappropriation and outright theft of those funds left all of the nearly one million guest workers shortchanged and destitute after having worked under dangerously oppressive conditions that caused them to be poisoned by herbicides and pesticides. Whenever a guest worker showed the slightest hint of resentment or any symptom of being ill they would be summarily deported to their home countries without being paid their full wages. Guest workers who were not performing at maximum efficiency were given daily doses of stimulants that often extended their work day by reducing needed sleep time. The abusive actions along with compounded thefts resulted in a massive accumulation of funds that was used by the bank to underwrite diverse investments in weapons systems, information systems, and incredible multi-figure bonuses to upper management and cash payoffs to selected regulators. The exponential growth of the fund was managed by offshore consultants who used some of the monies to locate, educate, and train some of the brightest minds from all fifty states in the art of corporate banking. The recipients of such assistance would become highly paid indentured servants on behalf of corporate behemoths. Within the past few years, these brilliant young people have become professionalized to be merged with seasoned corporate veterans to create an incredibly deceptive scheme that would rake all profits from every single checking and savings account without any governmental or international banking system oversight. The genius would lie in its simplicity. The bank would make duplicate shadow accounts for every individual who entrusted the bank with their earnings, retirement funds, inheritance checks, and all other forms of hard currency. The duplicate accounts would utilize the pilfered funds for various unsecured loans and other high risk investments. The original accounts would appear to be untouched while earning profits without any of activities ever being revealed to the account holders. The trillion dollar profit making machine worked wonderfully while robbing anyone who didn’t put the money in a sock or tin can for safe keeping. All of the money existed as virtual currency without any bills being printed or any coins being minted. The money was situated on encrypted private servers while being completely inaccessible to anyone who would could count on having the bank being honest with the naive public. The bank reached a point where it affected the value of currency-markets throughout the world and any fluctuation could cause a tsunami of unbearable losses or to create unbelievable windfalls for those who would be fortunate enough to stumble into oceans of free money.

One day, during the second decade of the current century, a cheerful young girl was laughing while counting the number of times that she could jump rope. She had never been noted by her teachers for being an exceptional student in kindergarten or even in her present third grade set of classes. She enjoyed reading a small book that had been entrusted to her by her imprisoned grandfather who recognized her brilliant mind and determined attitude. Her stated worst subject was math.

"One, zero, one, one, one, zero, one, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, one, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, one, one, one, zero, zero, zero, zero . . ."

She jumped rope and counted from afternoon until late evening, then her mother called out to her so that she could eat her supper and make ready to go to bed. The junk food dinner was uninspiring and uneventful. She skipped her homework, watched an hour of vapid television, and then went to bed without stirring; she fell asleep quickly. She slid into an impressive REM stage where intricate dreams carved out a beautiful complex city made up of fully articulated architecture that was contradictory to all known forms of physics and rules of art. When she awoke in the early morning, an idea formed that was difficult to overcome. She switched on her computer and logged onto the internet. She typed a few keystrokes and easily found herself beyond the many security walls that had previously protected unregistered servers and within a few minutes of typing found herself shedding light on what many call the Dark Web. A few more strokes and she caused a fantastic gold castle on the computer screen to collapse in ruin. The immense fortune that was hidden inside of it burst into flames and burned white hot until everything was transformed into digital ash. She logged off then went back to sleep where she would remain in a comatose state until she was revived two weeks later after having undergone a series of mandated electroshock and chemical procedures. When she opened her eyes, she was hooked up to many medical devices and was surrounded by armed soldiers. Both of her parents were sitting next to her showing signs of having been severely beaten and tortured. All of her father's teeth had been knocked out and her emaciated mother's nose was broken and pushed down to one side.

"Mother, Father, who hurt you? Why am I here? What's happened?"

A man in an expensive silk suit approached her.

"Honey, do you remember what you typed into your computer before you logged off? For some reason, the hard drive erased itself and all of the steps of your mischief have been mysteriously removed from the internet."

"Who are you? I'm thirsty."

The girl stared blankly towards the wall.

"Dear sweet thing, we will put you into a boiling pot of napalm if you don't come clean."

"What? Are you my uncle?"

"Ask your mother what this is all about."

"Mother?"

"Sweetheart, you stole nearly a quadrillion dollars then made it all vanish. Ninety-three thousand people have committed suicide and eight million people have been murdered worldwide all because you decide to play instead of studying like a good little girl.

"You are terrorist. You will be put to death if you don't make the money reappear."

The girl smiled weakly and lifted her hand.

“Please lend me your computer and I will fix it.”

A soldier handed her an expensive laptop then pointed a loaded assault rifle at her head.”

The young girl typed furiously while she sang along to a furious beat.

“One, zero, one, one, one, zero, one, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, one, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, one, one, one, zero, zero, zero, zero . . .”

The young girl stopped typing and handed the computer back to the man in the gray suit.

“All done?”

“Yes, capitalism is dead. I just now killed it.”

Several lethal bullets were fired into the girl's skull and both of her parents were shot several times in the back before the man in the gray suit and all of the soldiers on scene slit their own throats due to a impromptu bout of terminal insolvency. The reverberating economic catastrophe that resulted from the young girl's superior hacking assault produced a wave of financial despair that ruined markets all across the globe. Trillions of existing dollars were suddenly worth less than a single penny. Social media played a major role in distributing simplified design drawings of makeshift gallows, guillotines, and portable gas chambers that would be used by those who had lost their life savings to execute many corporate bankers, speculators, insurance brokers, and other suspects who might had been complicit in theft, blackmail, environmental pollution, extrajudicial torture, and numerous other crimes against humanity. Numerous political leaders and their entire family lines were assassinated. Two prominent loathsome loudmouthed heads of state accidentally blew themselves up when they tried to use a boobytrapped ATM in the presidential palace while attempting to cash a joint ten-figure bearer bond as payment for their hastily concluded venture to to sell nuclear assets before the bottom would fall out of the WMD market. Neighbors turned against neighbors. Many motorists mowed down scores of pedestrians while driving their cars, trucks, or buses. Cities burned and chaos reigned across formerly affluent neighborhoods, leaving many to wonder if it would ever be possible to return to feigned civility. Directed violence and mayhem against innocent victims in many developed countries continued as an unfunny harsh game of chance for many years until all imagined and real debts were finally settled and everyone could declare with confidence that they were solidly in the black.

Post-Eclipse Cadre

(Photos by author.)



The cadre moved into action during the few moments of darkness. Layers of the atmosphere were burned away and replaced with glittering ions as the lingering shadows struck fear into the masses.



A perpetual afterimage of the
devouring shadow that blotted out the
sun allowed for the formulation of a
plan to topple the established order of
beliefs and behaviors.



The people had been lulled into a
lingering slumber while their lifelines
were rerouted to enrich the very few.
A midday dawn was approaching.



Individuals would have to assert their
place on earth via collective action.
Swift reprisals were in store for those
who were lax in their precision to
affect change.



Elegance in efficiency would be all the rage as weapons fire could be heard in the distance. Playful counterbalance would defy the repressive regime.



Strategic cover from intrusive surveillance and direct assault is an important aspect of survival in a post-eclipse society.

Focused efforts to confront and repel the immutable power structures must be enhanced by symbolic rituals that will encourage others to join in the struggle for freedom and justice.

Performers

Carolina Maki Kitagawa, MFA, is a sculptor who has exhibited her multimedia works at various venues in the US and Mexico. She was a member of *Virtual Vérité* and appears in numerous fotonovelas including *See What You Mean* series for J. Paul Getty Museum.

Francesco X. Siqueiros, MFA, is a master printer and is the proprietor of El Nopal Press, a publisher of fine art lithographs. His works have been exhibited throughout Europe, Mexico, and Latin America. He was a member of *Virtual Vérité* and appears in numerous fotonovelas including *See What You Mean* series for J. Paul Getty Museum.

Samantha Cline, BA, is a writer and participated in the mass hopscotching across the J. Paul Getty Museum courtyard.

Stephanie Rose Guerrero, BFA, is a painter who has exhibited her works in Los Angeles and Mexico City. She was a member of *Virtual Vérité* and appears in numerous fotonovelas including *See What You Mean* series for J. Paul Getty Museum.

Danny Escalante, MFA, is an installation and performance artist who oftentimes attends major cultural events dressed in costume as identifiable/popular Latino stereotypes. He was a member of *Virtual Vérité* and appears in numerous fotonovelas including *See What You Mean* series for J. Paul Getty Museum.

Daniel Centofanti, MFA, is a photographer who has traversed the urban environment of Los Angeles without fear or loathing. He was a member of *Virtual Vérité* and appears in numerous fotonovelas including *See What You Mean* series for J. Paul Getty Museum.

Harry Gamboa Jr.

Virtual Vérité (2005-2017), international performance troupe; Founder. Asco (1972-1985), the East L.A.-based conceptual art group; Co-Founder Exhibitions: Marlborough Contemporary NY, Los Angeles Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York), Tate Liverpool, Centre Pompidou (Paris) , Museo de Bellas Artes (México City), Statens Museum of Kunst (Copenhagen), and other museums. Publications: The New Yorker, Flash Art, Artforum, Art in America, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Le Monde, Frieze, The Art Newspaper, Los Angeles Times, Pfeil Magazine, and Rolling Stone (Italy). Fotonovelas: See What You Mean, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017. Author: Urban Exile: Collected Writings of Harry Gamboa Jr., 1998. Faculty member of the Photo/Media Program at California Institute of the Arts. (Photo Credit: Barbie Gamboa)



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